ASLEF JOURNAL

The ASSOCIATED SOCIETY of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN

MAY 2016

Going Underground – what you see is what you get

FINN BRENNAN: TfL Underground and Overground

SADIQ KHAN: Making London a better and fairer place

TERRY WILKINSON: Operating the Night Tube

Remembering Steve Grant

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MAY 2016
Published by the ASSOCIATED SOCIETY of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN

Peter 'Muppet' Wilkinson doesn't understand you

He wants to break us but doesn't know you

WHILE, on behalf of our members, we try to deal with the uncertainty in the steel industry, it is hard not to have serious concerns for the future of those directly employed. The government's belated action, to deal with an issue of which they had prior knowledge, is not just woeful and inadequate but negligent; particularly for voting against tariffs to protect our steel industry in light of the increased tariffs the Chinese have announced. Car manufacturers are concerned for the future and it has serious implications for the supply chain. As a country, we cannot afford to be at the whim of another nation dominating the market, destroying competition, and then ramping up the price of essential materials in the future.

The Wilkinson affair rumbles on. There is, apparently, no retraction of his lies about £60k a year three day a week train drivers and we are not aware of any action being taken against him. But his influence in directing, from his £265k a year seat, the poor ITTs, and the consequences of seeking to impose conditions outside our agreements, has started on Southern GTR and Gatwick Express with other TOCs gearing up with similar nonsense. He said he would break us and we have asked the Department for Transport and the government whether this is their policy? Surprise, surprise! That question has not been answered. They obviously do not know you, or what you expect from your union.

Transport for London are at it again. They won't pay the due rise until June. What a poor employer! Morale was already low and the system is creaking. Our hopes lie with a new mayor who not only cares about London but those who work to keep the capital running.

Like many of you, I have stood on picket lines showing support for the junior doctors. They know, better than anyone, what safe patient care is and how to achieve it. Mr Hunt, who seems to have gone missing in action, patently does not and now we are having to recruit another 4,000 doctors from abroad. Add to that the thousands of teachers leaving their profession every year, exacerbated by academy dogma, and vocation is a dirty word in 2016.

We have lost a true friend and comrade in Bro Steve Grant, former district organiser on the Underground. Our thoughts are with Doreen, his family and friends. He was, and will be remembered as, one of the best.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary

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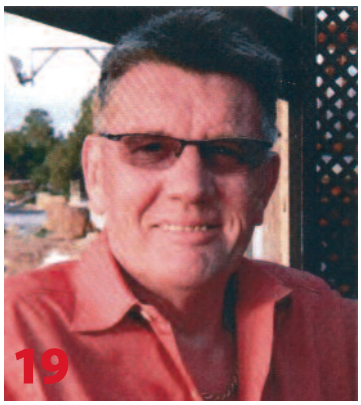
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Down by the river side

TOM WATSON, deputy leader of the Labour Party, in a powerful speech at ASLEF's parliamentary reception at the Palace of Westminster on 11 April, said that the party, one year on from a debilitating defeat in the general election, is now in position to take the fight to the Tories. Tom spoke about the historical ties between the trade unions and the Labour Party, and about how together, in the labour movement, we can prepare the ground for victory at the next general election.

Our annual reception, hosted by Kelvin Hopkins, Labour MP for Luton North, and chair of the ASLEF parliamentary group, is an opportunity for executive committee members, district organisers, reps and activists to put our views to MPs, peers, and other opinion formers. Kelvin called for a dedicated rail freight corridor in Britain, Shadow Transport Secretary Lilian Greenwood reaffirmed Labour's commitment to public ownership, and GS Mick Whelan said there would never be a better time to build a better railway than under the next Labour government.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn took time out of a busy schedule – he arrived hot foot from the chamber where he was tackling the Tories for being soft on tax evasion – to come and talk to ASLEF activists and patiently pose for a series of selfies!

Our guests in the Terrace Pavilion included Dave Anderson (Labour MP for Blaydon); John Cryer (Leyton & Wanstead); Peter Dowd (Bootle); Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton); Ian Lavery (Wansbeck); Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough); Liz McInnes (Heywood & Middleton); Ian Mearns (Gateshead); Grahame Morris (Easington); Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central); Gareth Thomas (Harrow West); Rosie Winterton (Doncaster Central); Peter Hain, former MP for Neath who now sits in the House of Lords; Val Shawcross, who speaks on transport for Labour in the London Assembly; Kevin Maguire, associate editor of the *Daily Mirror*; and Steve Cavalier, chief executive of Thompsons solicitors.

Photos: Andrew Wiard

ASLEF activists lobby peers and MPs at the Palace of Westminster

QUOTE...
'David Cameron's gift to the world: trickle down tax-dodging.' – **Marina Hyde** in *The Guardian*
...UNQUOTE

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Nicky Morgan is The Thick of It *come to life.*
Patrick Brusnahan

The battle against inequality is being lost.
Faiza Shaheen

SILVER SURFER
This image of EC5 Howard Kaye, standing for Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey on 5 May, went viral. Rebecca Croft-Griggs blogged dryly: 'Labour candidate demonstrates plans to tackle traffic congestion in South West Surrey.'

Keep it Co-op

CLAIRE McCARTHY, general secretary of the Co-operative Party, explains why you should vote 'Yes'

Do you shop, bank or insure with the Co-op? Has a ballot paper dropped into your inbox, or letter box, in the last couple of weeks? If so, please open it and vote 'Yes' to motion 12 before 18 May.

Co-operators and trade unionists share common roots. Just as the trade union movement set up the Labour Party to give workers a voice in Parliament, members of the co-operative movement, including the Co-op Group, set up the Co-operative Party. Nearly 100 years later the Co-op Party ensures the movement has a voice in the rooms where decisions are made – in Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and in town halls up and down the country. Motion 12 asks members of the Co-op Group if they want to continue that relationship.

Railway workers were the original pioneers of the co-op movement. As they travelled the country they discovered co-ops, shared the news, and set up new co-ops back home – sometimes getting the sack for their effort. Today ASLEF and the Co-op Party are working together to return our railways to public ownership. As Mick Whelan said last year, at a joint ASLEF/Co-op event at the Labour Party conference, 'Passengers and employees must be at the heart of these changes.' By voting 'Yes' to Motion 12 you can keep this important work going. For more information, visit www.keepit.coop

Show your support for the No DOO campaign with these ASLEF badges – available free from head office.

Answers? Questions! Questions? Answers!

ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan wowed an audience at Sheffield Cathedral, and 1.5 million radio listeners, when he appeared on *Any Questions* on Radio 4 on 18 March. First question for Mick and the other panellists – Chuka Umunna, Labour MP for Streatham; Nadhim Zahawi, Conservative MP for Stratford upon Avon; and Heather McGregor, a former investment banker who writes as Mrs Moneypenny in the *Financial Times* – was why are the poor paying for the mistakes of the rich? Other topics included the sugar tax; schools being turned into academies; the EU; the Budget and the resurgence in left-wing politics. The programme has been broadcast, without interruption, since 1948.

Putting people before profit

GS Mick Whelan addressed a rally at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester on the eve of the Northern Rail franchise being taken over by the Deutsche Bahn subsidiary Arriva Rail North. Mick, who was joined by Shadow Rail Minister Andy McDonald, Shadow Energy and Climate Change Minister Lisa Nandy, and RMT GS Mick Cash, warned that the new franchise will mean fewer jobs, worse services and poorer passenger safety. He said: 'Who could possibly believe that making the railway less safe, less accessible, and more expensive is the right thing to do?'

Ironmasters play Barnsley

Phil Odgers of The Men They Couldn't Hang; Headsticks; the Hurriers; the Wakes; the Black Lamps; Joe Solo; Attila the Stockbroker; and Grace Petrie are all playing a May Day festival of solidarity at the Polish Club in Barnsley on Sunday 1 May. 'There is a growing scene in the UK of bands and singers with a socialist aspect to their music,' said organiser Tony Wright. 'And a growing sense of community amongst the musicians.' Tickets are £10.

Steve Connolly, Finn Brennan, Howard Kaye, Marz Colombini and James McGowan out campaigning in Camden for Sadiq Khan.

QUOTE...

'Forcing all schools to become academies is quite an extraordinary land grab by the government. It reminds me of the dissolution of the monasteries.'

Angela Mason, cabinet member for children, Camden council

...UNQUOTE

CONFERENCES

ASLEF's **annual assembly of delegates** is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 9 to Friday 13 May. The **Welsh TUC** is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Tuesday 24 to Thursday 26 May. The **Matchwomen's festival** is at Nambucca, north London, on Saturday 2 July. The **Durham Miners' Gala** is on Saturday 9 July. The **Tolpuddle Martyrs' festival**, near Dorchester, is from Friday 15 to Sunday 17 July. The **Trades Union Congress** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 11 to Wednesday 14 September. The **Labour Party conference** is at the BT convention centre in Liverpool from Sunday 25 to Wednesday 28 September.

500 CLUB: The ASLEF WRC, with number 101, won the April draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £366.

Off the **rails**

STEPHEN HULL, editor-in-chief of the *Huffington Post UK*, made an utter mess of an interview with Steve Hewlett on *The Media Show* on Radio 4 when he bizarrely claimed it was good for people to work without being paid. When Hewlett asked the hapless Hull why *HuffPo*, which boasts $2.3 billion in revenues, won't pay the people who write for his online magazine blog, he blustered: 'I love this question! Because I'm proud to say that what we do is, we have 13,000 contributors in the UK, bloggers, and we don't pay them.' Er, yes. But why not? 'You know, if I was paying someone to write something, because I wanted it, to get advertising pay, that's not a real authentic way of presenting copy. So when somebody writes something for us, we know it's real. We know they want to write it. It's not been forced or paid for. I think that's something to be proud of.'

MEL THORLEY fondly recalls one story about Longsight legend Steve Biddulph, who has retired after 46 years on the railway. 'One morning, I was crossing the forecourt at Manchester Piccadilly to work the 5am staff train, and Steve was coming the other way, a bit merry. He said, "I've not been to bed, I partied late at Reddish Leisure, then went to a lock-in." I pointed to the 5.17 Bournemouth HST and said, "Get yourself on that banana, but don't fall asleep and miss Stockport," and he said, "Oh, don't worry, I'll be on it. I'm the driver!" Mad, mad days before zero tolerance kicked in.'

KEVIN MAGUIRE, associate editor of the *Daily Mirror*, and passionate Mackem, had fun in his Commons Confidential column in the *New Statesman* with a tale told by TUC apparatchik Kay Carberry at her retirement bash. When she joined the Congress House book club Kay discovered that rather than discussing a different book at each meeting, like most clubs, they always discussed the same tome, *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx. 'Imagine my surprise that our book group's convenor,' Kay told Kevin, 'is now the Shadow Chancellor.'

STEVE GRANT, former District 8 Organiser, and a regular correspondent to the *Journal* even in retirement, raised a smile at head office when, shortly before he died, he sent us this mock film poster – a skit on *Toy Story* – for *Tory Story*, featuring Brexit campaigner Boris Johnson heading for the stars, and out of the EU, with the stirring call 'To insanity and beyond!'

GUIDO FAWKES, the right-wing blog run by Paul Staines, has never been a friend of the workers of this world. But even it was moved to point out that, while Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Carwyn Jones were trying to save the Port Talbot steelworks, and the British steel industry, 'Dave is in Lanzarote [and] Sajid Javid is on an ill-timed jolly Down Under.'

Deborah, it's fine to see your young face smiling

District 5 WRC rep WENDY HURST reports from the TUC women's conference at Congress House in London

IT WAS an honour to represent ASLEF at the TUC women's conference this year along with Alison Miller, national secretary of the Women's Representatives Committee, and D2 rep; Deborah Reay, WRC chair and D8 rep; Collette Gibson (D7); and Julie Clegg (D3). There was a focus on concerns about the Trade Union Bill, especially its effect on female workers, and the increase in child poverty as a direct result of the Conservative government's austerity measures.

ASLEF's motion on acid attacks called on the Women's TUC to lobby for greater controls on the purchase of acid, along with a call for carrying significant amounts to be classed as a weapon of assault. Our second motion called for more lobbying and pressure on the Irish government to repeal the eighth amendment which takes a woman's right to choose back to the Dark Ages of risky back street abortions and all the health complications that can result.

Both motions were adopted unanimously. Collette spoke on a motion concerning pregnancy discrimination, sharing her experiences, as well as those of our members over the years. I spoke on a motion about sexual assaults on trains and Project Guardian (a British Transport Police campaign to encourage reporting of assaults) calling for more visible staffing on platforms and trains.

But the highlight of the conference for ASLEF was getting Deborah Reay elected to the Women's TUC committee; this means ASLEF is now represented on all the TUC equalities committees.

ASLEF in action: Collette Gibson, Julie Clegg, Wendy Hurst, Debbie Reay and Alison Miller pose for a picture in Great Russell Street

By the light of a thousand candles

EC president Tosh McDonald, film and television producer Tony Garnett, who made *Up the Junction*, *Cathy Come Home*, *The Price of Coal* and *Kes*, and Dan Jarvis, Labour MP for Barnsley Central, spoke at a memorial rally to mark the deaths, on the picket line in 1984, of Yorkshire miners David Jones and Joe Green. 'Great speech from Tosh,' said former Yorkshire Main NUM official Frank Arrowsmith. 'Trending very well on social media.' *Photographs: Ian Oxley*

AND THE PUBLIC WANTS WHAT THE PUBLIC GETS

Great Western has been slammed by the Advertising Standards Authority for a misleading poster it used with the phrase 'the railway belongs to the region it serves'. The ASA ruled that the use of the word 'belongs' was likely to be understood to imply public, as opposed to private, ownership. This is not the first time GWR has run a campaign designed to suggest that investment by the taxpayer has come out of the pockets of shareholders but a spokesman claimed: 'It was never our intention to suggest GWR is a publicly owned company. We are proud of the work we do as a private company, and are sorry this wasn't clear.' Cat Hobbs, director of the pressure group We Own It, said: 'Privatisation is now so unpopular that train companies can get good PR by pretending to be publicly owned. The GWR advert is not only misleading, it's a sign that it's time for real public ownership.'

COULDN'T ESCAPE IF I WANTED TO

A new Network Rail study says there is a strong case for a new rail link between Heathrow airport and Waterloo as part of the Southern Rail access proposals. A spokesman said: 'A new rail link connecting Heathrow to south London and Surrey is an opportunity to connect an additional 4.8 million passengers and would allow us to treble our rail capacity by 2040.'

OUR HOUSE

Julie Hunt, who works with Tim Finch and Mary Babalola in industrial relations at head office, was interviewed at length live by Sky News on a housing demo in central London in March. *Photo: Mick Holder*

Marz Colombini models ASLEF's *Kes* tee-shirt – with a Harvey Smith to the Tories' anti-Trade Union Bill – based on the iconic image from the famous Ken Loach film. £10 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

QUOTE...

'Education Secretary Nicky Morgan was commending the plan to "academise all schools". Whether these academies will teach the verb "to academise" we can but hope not.' – **Tom Peck** in *The Independent*

...UNQUOTE

Bucket list time – I wanted to drive a train again

JIM PETERS of the RMS had just one wish when doctors delivered bad news

IT'S two and a half years since I last drove a train, so it was a novelty when, at the end of February, I found myself back in the driving cab for a ride from Paddington to Swindon. It came about because FirstGroup employees chose Prostate Cancer UK as their charity of choice. Company and charity websites explain what the partnership aims to achieve but what it meant for me was a great day out, helping to raise awareness of a disease that kills – but can be cured if caught in time – and is the most common form of cancer among men in this country.

The ride was suggested after Prostate Cancer UK saw a blog post I wrote not long after I was told 'It's bucket list time.' The only thing I could think of was I'd like to drive a train again, although I've thought of a few more things since, hopefully proving I'm not a complete anorak!

I was the only one in the driving cab but, sitting back in the train, were my partner Colin Moon (frequent carrier of ASLEF banners on marches) and five mates – other train drivers I used to work with. Along with Mike Setchell, representing FirstGroup, Andy Hudd, EC member for District 7, and Ted Llewellyn, the driver of our train, we had our photo taken so the charity can use it to raise awareness of the disease. Being aware of the risk is crucial because if it's caught early it can be successfully treated but if it spreads beyond the prostate the treatment will only control, rather than cure, the cancer.

Howard Kaye, Steve Jacob, Gordon Johnston, Mick Carroll, Chris Munro, Andy Hudd, Jim Peters, Mike Setchell, Ted Llewellyn and Colin Moon on the PC special out of Paddington

Early diagnosis gives you more treatment choices, too, which is important because each treatment has its own side effects. You need to decide which ones you think you can live with most easily.

It's not known what causes prostate cancer but it mainly affects men over 50, and your risk increases with age. Another factor is ethnicity – 1 in 4 black men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer compared with the 1 in 8 risk faced by all men. And if a close male relative has had the disease, you are two and a half times more likely to be diagnosed, too.

Apart from being over 50 I didn't fall into any of the higher risk categories and the prostate specific antigen level in my blood was only slightly above normal, which shows that any man can get prostate cancer, which is why we need to know more – and talk more – about it.

You can read more about my personal experience of prostate cancer on my blog at rantfromthesuburbs.wordpress.com or visit the Prostate Cancer UK website at www.prostatecanceruk.org

QUOTE...

'The Chancellor has spent seven budgets "fixing the roof". It doesn't say much for the quality of his repair job that the rain has started to come in.' – **Larry Elliott**, economics editor of *The Guardian*

...UNQUOTE

Tea and coffee tastes better in a red and white ASLEF mug! Price £3.50 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

After George Osborne's calamitous Budget, and Iain Duncan Smith's resignation, this wicked poster started doing the rounds in cyberspace.

UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

Paul Nowak, a former call centre worker from Merseyside, is the new deputy general secretary of the TUC. Paul, 43, will handle such key policy areas as public services, transport, and policy. He said: 'This government wants to shift the balance of power in the workplace and silence opposition to cuts. But we are ready for the challenge and will continue to campaign for a better, fairer and more equal Britain.'

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Strike a light

THE Fireflys, the Hurriers, the Wimmin's Institute, Gapmouth, Steve White & the Protest Family, Raven Garcia, Swingerella, and Thee Faction are all playing this year's Matchwomen's festival, organised by historian Louise Raw to mark the strike at the Bryant & May factory in the East End of London in 1888.

'It's a celebration of wild and wonderful women past, present and future,' said Louise. 'A friendly summer knees-up for women, children, trade unionists, new lefties, old lefties, and all those who love them!'

Speakers include Shami Chakrabarti, outgoing director of Liberty; Sarah Jackson, author of *East London Suffragettes*; Sunny Singh, who wrote *Hotel Arcadia*; and Rachel Holmes, author of *Eleanor Marx*. Terry McCarthy, former director of the National Museum of Labour History, will talk about the betrayal of women workers after the war; Lisa Mckenzie of the LSE about the fight against austerity; Nadine Houghton of the GMB about organizing women in the workplace; and Nina M, after *The Archers*, about surviving domestic abuse.

'We had amazing support from ASLEF members and branches last year,' said Louise. 'So I hope you'll join us on Saturday 2 July for our fourth annual shindig. This year it's a real party. We'll be at Nambucca, a friendly, rock'n'roll, leftie venue on the Holloway Road, in north London, just a few minutes' walk from Archway tube.' Tickets are £5.

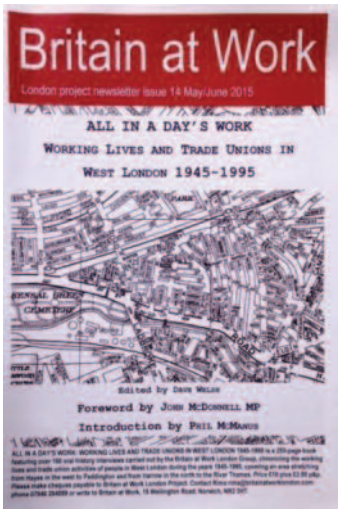
The Fireflys (top) are set to light up Matchfest 2016 in Islington

Real labour of love

TRACEY LONGMAN of Bedford branch remembers when Britain still made lots of stuff and people had jobs which paid and of which they were proud

West London in the 1950s had one of the biggest concentrations of manufacturing industry in the country. An area of some 85 square miles had household names like Wall's, Napier's, Nestlé, Heinz, Hoover, Lyons, Optrex, EMI, Gillette, Kodak and Guinness. *All in a Day's Work: Working Lives and Trade Unions in West London 1945-1995* edited by David Welsh (Britain at Work, £10) draws on an oral history project which collected more than 100 interviews with people who had worked, and often lived, in the area during the five decades after World War II. They talk about their lives, the sort of work they did, and their conditions at work. They discuss their involvement in trade union activities and disputes, as initial post-war improvements in living standards went into reverse. After brief explanatory passages about different industries, we hear the authentic voices of the men and women who worked there. They have been faithfully transcribed, not tidied up, so you feel as if you are sitting listening to someone telling you a story. The interviews are cut into bite-size chunks and interspersed with lots of photos and entertaining visual material that helps make the book very readable and enjoyable.

It's the first in a series about London's working people in the second half of the 20th century. The project is clearly a labour of love, with a passion to let working people tell real history, as it was lived, in their own words. It creates a pang of nostalgia for a time when we made stuff, and people had jobs of which they were proud.



London calling

Transport for London has announced that the new London Overground operator – on a seven and a half year contract worth £1.5 billion – will be Arriva Rail London. Arriva will take over from LOROL in November.

QUOTE...

'The thing you've got to remember with Michael [Gove] is he is basically a bit of a Maoist – he believes the world makes progress through a process of creative destruction!' – **David Cameron**

...UNQUOTE

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FLYING SCOTSMEN

New Azuma trains, with much faster acceleration, will cut journey times from Edinburgh to London on the East Coast main line by 22 minutes to four hours in 2018. The new fleet of 65 trains, being built by Hitachi at Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, will accelerate from 0-125mph about a minute faster than the current stock. The Azuma – Japanese for 'east' – will reach 125mph in 4 minutes 30 seconds compared with 5 minutes 10 seconds for VTEC's current electric trains and 7 minutes for its diesel units.

New train with go faster stripes

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said: 'These state of the art inter-city express trains will transform rail travel for passengers between London, the north east and Scotland.'

I CAN RUIN THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN

The government was defeated in three votes in the House of Lords – on substantial amendments about electronic balloting, facility time, and funds used by unions for political campaigning – on the Trade Union Bill. 'This is a good day for the 6 million trade union members across the UK,' said TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady. 'But a bad day for the government.'

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Standing up for you

Help make London a better and fairer place to live and work

SADIQ KHAN, Labour's candidate for Mayor of London, reveals what he will do if elected to City Hall

LONDON is at a crossroads and millions of people will be going to the polls on 5 May to decide the future of our great city. There is a huge amount at stake in this mayoral election – Londoners are being priced out of their own city by the Tory housing crisis and the rising cost of commuting, while the younger generation is missing out on the opportunities that London gave me and my family. This is not good enough – and we need to take action now. If we don't, it could be too late.

VALUE OF TRADE UNIONS

I am proud to be the son of a bus driver who grew up on a council estate in south London. It was through my father's work as a bus driver that I first learned the value of trade unions. Without a union fighting to protect his pay and conditions at work, life could have been a lot harder for my brothers and sister and me.

Unions like ASLEF work tirelessly to stop workers like my father from being exploited. It is through their work, in partnership with the Labour Party, that we have secured things such as the right to maternity pay and the right to paid holiday. The Tories want to erode these rights and stop workers from being able to do their jobs properly.

As Mayor of London, I will fight to protect workers' rights and maintain better industrial relations, abandoning Boris Johnson's policy of refusing to meet with representatives of Transport for London workers. This counter-productive approach has led to twice as many strikes under the Tories and big delays to the Night Tube.

London is a world-class city, and my ambition is to create a transport network which offers commuters a world-class, and affordable, experience. As a former Transport Minister, I know what needs to be done to improve London's transport system for everyone. That's why I have committed to freezing all TfL fares for four years, introducing a one hour Bus Hopper ticket and pushing for TfL to take control of London's commuter rail routes. Poor commuter services are a daily headache for thousands of Londoners and only by giving the mayor the power to run our trains, whilst maintaining all terms and conditions for staff, can we get a grip of the situation.

Another vital issue I will take a lead on as London Mayor is housing. The Tories, under Boris Johnson and David Cameron, have presided over the worst housing crisis in generations and it is London's workers, particularly those on low wages, who are paying the price.

Sadiq at Westminster (top); campaigning on the streets of the capital (above right); with the EC and DO8 Finn Brennan (above); meeting ASLEF members on International Women's Day (above right); and talking to Tosh McDonald, Mick Whelan, Marz Colombini, Andy Hudd and Andy Hourigan in the executive committee room at head office (centre left)

Not enough houses, especially affordable houses, are being built which is leading to escalating rents and house prices. This means that ASLEF members, and other workers, could be forced out of our city unless we take urgent action. As Mayor of London, I will set up a new team of housing experts in City Hall called Homes for Londoners. Reporting directly to me, they will fast track the building of genuinely affordable homes to rent and to buy.

FREEZING ALL TFL FARES

I'll also make sure Londoners get first dibs with new homes built on mayoral land offered to Londoners first, not sold off-plan to overseas investors. And, to improve conditions for private renters, I'll name and shame rogue landlords and set up a London-wide not-for-profit lettings agency to cut out rip-off fees and bring some stability for tenants and good landlords.

FAIRNESS AT THE HEART

I want to put fairness at the heart of everything the London Mayor does. To make sure this happens, I will set up a new fairness team at City Hall, to promote good workplace practices like fair pay, improve health and safety, and ensure access to opportunity for all Londoners. It will focus on increasing the number of Londoners paid the London living wage, increasing the number of apprenticeships offered by employers, and preventing bad employment practices, such as blacklisting.

Lastly, I want to thank you for your backing both in my selection as Labour's mayoral candidate and in the campaign to win back City Hall. My mission is to restore opportunity for everyone and I know that, together, we can make London a better and fairer place for all Londoners to live and work.

Sadiq Khan, 45, was born and brought up in Earlsfield, south London. He read law at the University of North London (now London Metropolitan University) and worked as a solicitor, specialising in human rights, and councillor on Wandsworth Borough Council, before becoming Labour MP for Tooting in 2005. He was Minister for Transport under Gordon Brown and Shadow Justice Secretary, Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Minister for London in opposition.

Underground Overground wombling free

District 8 Organiser FINN BRENNAN reflects on TfL's land grab, Boris Johnson's vanity projects, and what it might mean for our members

TfL wants to run more rail services into and out of the capital with more success than the last London Mayor whose vanity projects left him hanging around

IT was announced, with much fanfare, and the blowing of the mayoral trumpet, in January that Transport for London is to be given the go ahead to take control of large parts of the rail services serving London. Although, beneath the headlines, this is just a 'consultation', it is clear that there is widespread political support for the plan, originally mooted by Ken Livingstone, to operate suburban services under the London Overground banner.

The first services to come under the next Mayor of London's control will be some of those operated by Southeastern, in 2018, with other routes currently operated by Southern, Thameslink and Great Northern to follow in 2021. There is also the potential for some SWT services to be taken over in 2019.

ASLEF members will have mixed feelings about this. It is, of course, an implicit admission that the ideologically-driven Tory dream that services would be improved by a host of competing private companies, has failed. An integrated, planned system with, at least, some level of democratic control is clearly better.

TfL control has undoubtedly led to improvements in staffing and service levels on the old Silverlink routes now operated by LOROL. Hundreds of extra jobs, and ASLEF members, have been created. But it would be unwise to see TfL control as a panacea for the problems that London's commuters, visitors, and the hard working staff who serve them, face every day.

For a start, there is the issue of cost. It's easy to promise big improvements in service, and more rolling stock, but there is nothing in the consultation that explains exactly where the new money that is needed will come from.

While drivers, and other staff affected, can be confident that ASLEF and the other trade unions will make sure their interests are protected during any changes, passengers who are led to believe that there will be rapid improvements will find themselves disappointed. The government has made big cuts in TfL's budget, while the failure of the Bombardier signalling contract, and the escalation in costs of the SSR signalling upgrade, cannot fill anyone with confidence about their ability to manage properly big projects. And, of course, TfL doesn't just deal with rail. Apart from Boris Johnsons's vanity projects, of cable cars and a garden bridge, £4 billion is being spent on a roads modernisation project in London. And if you want to know how well it's going, just mention Elephant & Castle roundabout the next time you bump into a London cabbie!

But, while TfL expands, there are many problems that are simply being ignored. Industrial relations on London Underground stumble from crisis to crisis without any clear vision or even a willingness at the top of the organisation to change things. It was clear, during the dispute over pay and the introduction of the Night Tube, that those nominally responsible for leading the management negotiations had to report back to even more senior layers above them.

It's hard to disagree with Sadiq Khan's description of the TfL hierarchy as 'bloated' when drivers see layer upon layer of management, all keen to pass, and play the blame game, but reluctant to take on any responsibility.

Nowadays senior TfL personnel work from offices high above the streets in the better parts of town. But if they took time out from contemplating the growth of their empire, and focused on solving the problems on their home patch, then the people of London would be much better served and transport in London would really be improved.

Trouble at Tramlink

ASLEF members on Tramlink, which is operated by FirstGroup under a TfL concession, have overwhelmingly rejected a three year pay offer. Although pay and conditions at Tramlink have greatly improved since we won recognition 12 years ago, there remains a large, and unjustified, gap between their salary and others in our industry. Tram drivers do a difficult and stressful job and the success of the system they operate has been key to driving economic growth in Croydon and surrounding areas. It is only right that they are properly rewarded for the work they do. We have now reopened negotiations with the company but, unless there is a major change in attitude, it seems likely that a dispute will follow.

Dispute triggered by management failure

ASLEF members at Arnos Grove, along with members of the RMT, were forced to take strike action in March in a dispute caused by a breakdown in industrial relations. The catalyst was management's decision to initiate disciplinary action against a driver who had been unable to book on for duty when a manager was not available. This was an issue that could, and should, have been easily resolved, but management refused to discuss it at either local or trains council level. That our members had to take industrial action is an indictment of the failure of senior management to deal with underlying problems on the line.

ALL NIGHT LONG

TERRY WILKINSON, EC member for District 8, and GARY COMFORT, vice-chair, trains functional council, report on the introduction of the Night Tube on London Underground

THE proposed introduction of the Night Tube on London Underground on Friday and Saturday nights has resulted in an additional 192 part-time train operators being recruited, of which 41 were internal and 151 external. The initial nomination process turned into a bit of a fiasco, with staff in a number of classes being allocated at locations they didn't want and, at the same time, others who wanted those locations being placed somewhere else.

The issue was raised with management and it was agreed that the nomination process would start again, with staff side having input, and this resulted in some of the initial problems being addressed. The TOps will be placed at these locations. Jubilee line: Stratford and Wembley Park; Victoria line: Seven Sisters and Brixton; Northern line: Morden, Golders Green and High Barnet; Central line: White City and Leytonstone; Piccadilly line: Arnos Grove and Acton Town.

The Night Tube operation will be introduced in a staggered way, initially on the Jubilee and Victoria lines, followed by the Central and Northern lines and, finally, the Piccadilly line. At this stage a start date hasn't been agreed for any implementation.

A number of concerns were raised by current train operators about how management would use these new staff members and we addressed these concerns with management at the first opportunity. It was agreed that all Night Tube staff would work to the same framework (no overtime working) and enjoy the same benefits of existing full-time staff. We also made changes to the contract of employment, removing the words 'will work at least 15 hours a week' and replacing them with 'will work 16 hours a week'. We also added a reference in the acceptance letter covering the issue of only allowing these staff members to work Friday and Saturday nights.

We have also reached an agreement with the company that Night Tube TOps will get annual leave on Christmas Eve when it falls on a Friday or a Saturday (it's a Saturday this year). This prevents Christmas Day working.

Whilst speaking to the new train operators at Ashfield House training centre it became clear that the vast majority would like the opportunity to become full-time TOps. We are pleased to say that, after a number of meetings on this issue, it has now been agreed that the opportunity will be given to these staff to apply to become full-time train operators.

It should also be noted that if a current full-time TOp wishes to become a Night Tube TOp they will be given priority for depot choice.

We continue to meet with management on a weekly basis addressing Night Tube issues including rostering, and spare coverage allocation of annual leave. A document has been produced by Steve Crowley that was distributed to the Night Tube operators at a recent open meeting that ASLEF arranged to give information. At the meeting it was requested that further meetings take place, which we are happy to arrange.

We are pleased to report that a huge number of the new TOps have chosen to join ASLEF and we hope we can continue to push for every LU driver to be one of our members. Because ASLEF is the train drivers' trade union; the best, and most effective, trade union for Tube train operators to join.

Mayor Boris delayed the Night Tube

ASLEF members voted overwhelmingly to accept a pay deal and Night Tube offer from LU. The vote was in favour: 88.6%. Against: 11.4%. DO8 **Finn Brennan** said: 'ASLEF members on London Underground voted by a huge majority to accept the improved offer on pay and Night Tube. Last year management tried to force through changes to rosters that would have meant unlimited increases in weekend and night shifts with a pay rise of just 0.5%. Our members took two days of absolutely solid strike action to protect their working conditions and win an improved offer. Our strength and solidarity achieved an above-inflation pay rise and real improvements in conditions that will give drivers, and other grades, much more flexibility and control over their work/life balance in the future.

'This is a real victory for strong, pragmatic trade unionism. There will always be changes in the workplace, but change must come through negotiation and agreement, and should always bring real benefits for employees. If TfL had been prepared to negotiate a fair deal from the start, then two days of strike action could have been avoided and Night Tube would have started last year. We are proud of the fact that we achieved a good deal for the hard working staff who keep London moving.'

Finn added: 'We feel the outgoing Mayor of London, who has failed Londoners on so many levels during his time in office, deliberately created an unnecessary dispute for his own political ambitions. The outgoing mayor has, in the process, damaged the trust between TfL and its employees by the relentlessly political nature of what was, or should have been, an industrial negotiation. It will be good to see the back of Boris because the difficulties he caused delayed the introduction of the Night Tube by 18 months.'

So what have the h&s reps ever done for me?

JASON WYATT, staff side secretary of the trains health & safety council on London Underground, reports on the achievements of your h&s reps

EVERY day, across London Underground, members see the effects of our work protecting their welfare; representation at case conferences, LDIs, CDIs, or medical appeals, improvement to conditions, pay, pensions, and benefits. The contribution made by your health & safety council reps shouldn't be overlooked. We have worked hard over the last year to ensure access to the track is undertaken with traction current discharged; fought proposals to undertake filming in cabs without agreement on how it is done; and highlighted the issue of oblique images on the network which required additional staffing levels.

When age medicals have been undertaken in the past, it was not uncommon for unknown medical conditions to be found which, in turn, led to forced retirement; eg loss of hearing, visual impairment, or the onset of diabetes. We led the changes that allow drivers to use hearing aids to meet the required hearing standards. We brought in a different colour vision test that more adequately captures those with colour deficiencies and now allows varifocals to be worn while undertaking your substantive role.

The latest changes have been the taking of anti-depressants while still retaining the ability to continue driving. In the past, taking these medicines would have always resulted in the train operator being removed from driving duties. Instead, we were able to establish a trial so that those taking anti-depressants could be assessed while driving. If you pass that assessment, you can return to solo driving duties whilst taking a limited range of LU recommended anti-depressants.

We are pleased to report that 37 people took part in the trial over a 12 month period and 18 returned to normal driving duties. In the past, all 37 would have been removed from driving duties for the duration of the medication, plus a few months more so the body could completely remove from the system all traces. It was not uncommon in such cases that taking this medication would lead to medical retirement of staff; something ASLEF realised was not always warranted.

Another of our major achievements helps those who use insulin injections to control their diabetes. Train operators who take insulin are now, after an assessment period, able to undertake driving duties alone. This has been rolled out to all grades.

So what has all this got to do with what ASLEF has done for me, you may still be asking? That's the point. It is the work undertaken at meetings, and working with management, that enables drivers who were once medically retired too early to remain in employment. We don't gloat about the improvements we make; maybe we should. Look around your depot and you may be looking at a colleague who could have been forced to retire early if it had not been for the work done by your ASLEF health & safety reps.

Jah Wobble

As preparations continue for sub-surface lines to move to automatic train control MARC TANNER, who leads for the trains health & safety council on upgrade issues, reports on the topics on the table

THE issue of wobble, or lateral movement, on the TBC is being investigated. London Underground engineers have explained to Bombardier what information we require for lateral movement dimensions, ie how much movement we can live with before saying it's defective. A mechanical review was held on 9 March. We are awaiting dimensions from Bombardier.

A few trains have been found with the in-carriage CIS destination displays in the first car blanking out. Bombardier have reported that they found the issue is with the TCMS software. However, they still don't have a solution. The next TCMS software drop will, it is hoped, have a solution by June or July.

It's hoped that introducing a new 1200mm windscreen wiper will prevent scratching. A new blade and wiper design is also proposed.

The log book has been consulted by upgrades reps and we are happy with what is proposed. A new defect log book prototype has been procured, white copy for depot maintainers and DDM, blue copy for TOps, and the yellow copy to remain in book. A no movement buddy and sensitive edge procedure has been included, giving useful advice on wording to be included on the fly cover to assist in fault reporting.

At a workshop following up our S stock seat set up training survey, concerns were raised about the low numbers of TOps taking up the offer of re-training. Reps pointed out that until we close out any training issues, we will never be able to rule this out as the cause of the discomfort being experienced by drivers. Line management now propose to introduce this into CDP, and also CMS, to ensure all TOps are retrained and not given the option of opting out. I have to ask that everyone please ask for the training so the introduction of the survey can be speeded up.

TCMS HMI slow and unresponsive: LU is fitting diagnostic software to trains identified as the worst offenders to understand what is causing the problem. Once data is received, Bombardier will provide resources for investigation and resolution.

TBTC signal sighting meetings. Several meetings have taken place to discuss the design of track-based signs and the method of sighting them. We have asked to look at our two preferred designs from the front of a train. A methodology was also looked at on how 3D mapping of the tunnels may help speed up some of the positioning of the signs in less complicated areas. Where signal sighting reps think the job needs a sight visit that will happen.

EU: SHOULD WE STAY

ALAN JOHNSON, Labour MP for Hull West & Hessle, former Home Secretary, and one-time general secretary of the Communication Workers' Union, is leading Labour's campaign for Britain to stay in Europe. Here he explains why...

BRITAIN is better off in Europe. The European Union brings us jobs and prosperity, and protects British workers and consumers. Leaving would reduce Britain's influence in the world and threaten the strong rights we currently enjoy. There is a proud Labour tradition of campaigning for Britain in Europe because it's good for British jobs, and good for the men and women in those jobs.

STRONG RIGHTS FOR WORKERS

European rules, agreed by a UK Labour government, give working people guaranteed minimum levels of paid leave; equal rights for agency workers; paid maternity and paternity leave; equal pay; protection from workplace discrimination; high workplace safety standards; and protection for staff when companies change ownership.

But it's not just workers' rights that are extended and protected through Britain's membership of the EU. Your rights as a consumer are also protected by Europe-wide agreements, including the right to return unwanted goods and be promptly refunded; the right to have refunds processed within 14 days; a two-year guarantee for all online purchases; and the right to prompt delivery and a cooling-off period when you buy online.

When Leave campaigners like Boris Johnson complain about 'regulation' or 'red tape' what they really mean is vital workplace protection on which British workers rely. And when they talk about 'reclaiming sovereignty' or 'returning powers to Britain' what they mean is giving themselves the freedom to strip away the strong workers' rights that EU membership brings us. While we are part of the EU, those rights are guaranteed. But the Tories hate this. If we were to leave, British workers would be at the mercy of a Tory government determined to undermine us.

EU WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

This sounds technical – but it isn't. The Working Time Directive is a Europe-wide agreement that gives British workers: a minimum of 28 days' paid holiday each year; a 20 minute break for every six hours of work; a rest for at least 11 hours in any 24 hours; restrictions on excessive night work; 24 hours off after seven days of work; and protection from being made to work more than 48 hours per week.

It wasn't until we got the Working Time Directive that British construction workers, for instance, were guaranteed paid holidays. These rights are protected for all EU citizens, including British workers – but only as long as we are in the EU.

Britain is a proud trading nation, with almost half our exports going to EU countries. That was worth £227 billion last year to the UK economy. We receive, on average, £26.5 billion of investment every year from other EU countries. UK jobs and businesses, large and small, depend on trade with Europe – and future EU trade is set to create 790,000 more jobs by 2030 by opening up new markets in digital services, energy and tourism.

Companies from all over the world – not just from other European countries – choose to build their offices and factories in the UK, and to recruit staff here, because we are a gateway to the European single market, the largest market in the world.

From car manufacturing to high-tech industries to financial services, this inward investment creates vital jobs across Britain. Because of the risk of Brexit, inward investment is already beginning to dry up. If we leave, investors will take their businesses – and jobs – elsewhere. Take our critical steel industry, for example. The idea that leaving Europe is the answer is a dangerous fallacy; more than half of our steel exports go to Europe. The real problem facing British steel isn't Europe, it's the Conservative Party.

STRONGER AND MORE SECURE

The European Union is a market of 500 million people. That's why other countries around the world are so keen to do business with us. When it comes to negotiating with other big blocs, like China and the US, we are far stronger as part of a powerful group of 28 nations than we would be on our own. The EU amplifies our voice on the world stage.

Many of the big problems Britain faces today are international problems: climate change, terrorism, and cross-border crime. We are better off working together with our neighbours to solve these problems rather than pulling out of the EU and weakening our country. At a time of instability in the Ukraine and the Middle East, it's important to be part of a group of nations committed to peace, security and democracy.

In terms of our own borders, Britain is in the best possible position – in the EU, signed up to the Dublin accord, but outside Schengen. Being outside Schengen means we maintain control of our own borders, and the Dublin accord means refugees and economic migrants from outside Europe must register in the first European country in which they arrive. We check the passport details of every single person who comes into the UK, including EU nationals, against terrorist watch lists and other databases and, since 2010, 6,000 EU nationals have been turned away because of security concerns.

OUR VOICE AT THE TABLE

The EU is the world's biggest market. Our trade with other European countries is vital to our economy – and it would continue to be vital whether we were in or out of the EU. So we need a strong voice at the top table which decides the rules on everything from free trade to fishing.

If we left the EU, Britain would still have to follow the EU's rules. But we wouldn't have any say in making those rules. Countries like Norway which aren't part of the EU have to adopt EU regulations in return for trading with the world's largest single market – take it or leave it.

Of course, the EU needs reform. But when reforms are being debated and agreed, we need to make sure they work for us. That means staying in, and speaking up for Britain – not being reduced to a powerless spectator, watching from the sidelines.

OR SHOULD WE GO?

MICK WHELAN, general secretary of ASLEF, explains why the executive committee is backing Brexit

ASLEF is backing the campaign to leave the European Union in the referendum on 23 June. Not because we are standing shoulder to shoulder with Nigel Farage – a man memorably described by *The Economist* as 'a saloon bar bore' and with whom we have nothing in common, politically or industrially – but because we believe the EU has become a rich man's club which offers lots for the boss class – for the neo-liberals whose siren calls echo around the corridors of power in the capitals of Europe – but little for ordinary hard-working men and women trying to earn a living in this Conservative Age of Austerity.

At the heart of our objections are a couple of proposals emerging from Brussels which we think will be bad for Britain, in general, and bad for the railway, in particular – the European Commission's Fourth Railway Package and the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership with the United States of America.

The Fourth Railway Package is a controversial set of proposals which would foist the British model of rail privatisation on the rest of Europe. We know that privatisation doesn't work. It's not the right model for Britain and it's not the right model for Europe. But this package – which, despite the reservations of many MEPs, and protests from rail workers right across the continent, the neo-liberal ideologues at the heart of the EU appear determined to foist on people – would turn what we see, and is still seen in many European countries, as a public service, into an opportunity for a few firms to plunder a private profit.

BAD FOR BRITAIN

Privatisation hasn't worked, doesn't work, and will not work in what is – like other public services, such as the provision of gas, water, electricity and the Royal Mail – a natural monopoly. The model is broken and is selling Britain – passengers, taxpayers, and those of who work on the railway – woefully short. In the last 20 years, since John Major privatised our industry – a privatisation, incidentally, which even Margaret Thatcher described as 'a privatisation too far' – we have seen rolling stock get older, trains get more crowded, and fares go through the roof. We now have the highest fares in Western Europe, because of privatisation.

A FLAWED MODEL

But the European Commission is determined to impose this flawed model on the rest of Europe. And, if they succeed, it will prevent us from ever bringing the railways back into public ownership. We were delighted when Jeremy Corbyn – who we backed when he was campaigning to become leader of the Labour Party – came out and committed the next Labour government to renationalising Britain's railways. It's not just the right policy, it's a popular policy – even Conservative voters are fed up with paying over the odds to help the privatised train companies make a profit at our expense – but the Fourth Railway Package, if it's enacted, will prevent us from doing what voters want.

The Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership is a free trade and investment treaty being negotiated, in secret, between the EU and the US. It's unnecessary, as the EU and US already enjoy strong trade and investment relationships, with tariffs at minimal levels, so why are companies so keen to see this new deal signed?

Because the aim of TTIP is to remove those barriers which restrict the profits transnational corporations can make. The problem is that what global corporations perceive as barriers include vital regulations protecting our labour rights, food safety and banking safeguards. It might be handy for profit-hungry corporations if they didn't have to comply with social and environmental regulations – many would like to live in a free market Wild West – but it would not be good for the rest of us.

Another aim of TTIP is to open public services and government procurement contracts to competition from transnational corporations. Our health and education sectors are undergoing gradual privatisation – from children's social services to care homes and from ambulance services to the railways – and TTIP would accelerate this transformation of public services into privately-run sectors. The aim, of course, is to make a private profit at public expense.

TTIP would also make it easier for companies to source goods and services from the US, where labour standards are lower, and to eradicate workers' rights, like collective bargaining and the right to organise, on the grounds that they restrict their business model and profit margins. I think it's ironic, to say the least, that David Cameron spent weeks earlier this year travelling around Europe in a bid to take back British sovereignty from Brussels when he is happy to hand it over, through TTIP, not just to the Americans, but to neo-liberals everywhere.

FREE MARKET WILD WEST

There are other arguments, of course – at ASLEF we were very concerned about the way Greece has been treated by the European Union – but when ASLEF's executive committee met to discuss our position, the decision to back a Brexit was taken – with the proviso that we not campaign alongside, or stand on any platforms with, any of the racist, xenophobic and misogynist supporters of the Leave campaign from UKIP and the right-wing of the Conservative Party – primarily because of what the Fourth Railway Package would do to our industry and what the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership would do to our country.

I want to be elected – the Labour candidate for Mayor of London meets women members at head office

We're gonna rock to the rules that I make

ASLEF women were invited to meet Sadiq Khan, the Labour candidate for London Mayor, on International Women's Day. I was impressed by Sadiq's attention to detail, writing down for reference the name of each of the seven women who had taken the time to attend. I found this refreshing.

We had a variety of questions from across the districts – Districts 5, 6 and 8 were all represented – some about TfL, including a lack of diversity at executive level and the proposed extension of TfL operated lines under the London Overground banner. Sadiq said the extension of TfL services could be considered 'regional nationalisation'. Contrast that with London Buses where 40% of the franchises are run by foreign state owners and where there are 140 different pay grades. Sadiq said to get more women into leadership roles we have to change society, giving girls computer coding lessons in schools, and investing in the programme Skills for London. He spoke passionately about his own daughters, aged 16 and 14, being given the same opportunities as young men, and said they shouldn't be restricted from careers because of society stereotypes.

We had a lengthy discussion about flexible working and the letter of the law, which basically says you can apply, but the reality for those on the footplate is that you are highly likely to be turned down. Flexible working not only relates to child care but to those who have other dependants who need assistance. Sadiq said there is a need to educate employers on the economic benefits of flexible working – nurseries, on average, charge £290 per child per week so, if you have multiple children, your child care bill soon outweighs the point of working. The public sector, he said, should set an example to the private sector. Start times are a problem; if you can find a nursery open at the start of your shift you will normally be charged way over the odds. Sadiq agreed to take this on board and understands the need for early bird nurseries; we discussed those available to staff at Royal Mail who started at 06.00 at Mount Pleasant and wondered if anything could be done around this.

Sadiq was asked whether he uses the transport network and, as a typical commuter, could recite his route to Westminster without thinking, including specific bus numbers. He said if elected that the relationship built with ASLEF would continue, that leadership matters, and it comes from the top.

I found Sadiq honest and to the point. He spoke in quite a businesslike manner – which should appeal to businesses – while retaining a common touch that speaks to the individual. The fact that this potential mayor has spoken more to this trade union during the last year than the current incumbent has in eight years in office speaks volumes. Polls suggest Sadiq is 10 points ahead but a look at the last general election tells us nothing is certain. Given the way Zac Goldsmith recently voted in Parliament, to reduce money to people on disability benefit, the time taken by Sadiq to meet with us is, I think, an indication of the sort of mayor he would be.

Elizabeth Cocks, WRC6 and St Pancras branch

Upcoming **events**

BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 3 MAY
For all retired and working members at Brighton and the other Sussex branches from 14.00 at Brighton railway club.

HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 11 MAY
Old boys' reunion from 11.0 in the Greyhound, London Road, Bromley. Details from Ray Cooper or Len Blackford.

OLD OAK COMMON – TUESDAY 14 JUNE
The retired section's annual reunion is from 13.00 to 16.00 at the AGV Club, Ponderosa, Alwyn Gardens, Acton W3 0JH.

Please send your all branch news, reports and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

Thank you, Doddo

Nigel Gibson and Howard Kaye hand Doddo over to the tender mercies of Tony West

Peter 'Doddo' Dodgson has joined the Retired Members' Section so at the District 5 council meeting in March his brothers and sisters had the pleasure of saying thank you. DO5 Nigel Gibson made a presentation in recognition of his services as Stratford rep and D5 chair. He's an ASLEF stalwart, a lifelong member of Stratford branch, and served as branch secretary, company council rep, chair of AAD in 2007, and was a delegate to the Labour Party conference and TUC.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter

DO5 Nigel Gibson, with branch chair Tom Casey and secretary Allan Gosling, fields questions

Light at the end of the tunnel

Tilbury held its first branch meeting for 2016 on Sunday 28 February with Nigel Gibson, our district organiser, explaining the problems in the freight sector due to a downturn in traffic flows, and how it will affect drivers in the short and long term. But, despite the doom and gloom, there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel as ASLEF is not burying its collective head in the sand and is being very pro-active and talking to the TOCs to try and alleviate the situation should drivers be displaced. When Nigel finished his address there was a Q&A session but, sadly, he had to leave the meeting sharpish, despite not buying everyone a beer before going, and missing out on a rather lovely buffet prepared by our business council rep Steve Wilson's wife Margaret. Steve thanked DSM Doug Thornhill for his help over the years as he is moving on to pastures new, still within the industry, and wished him all the best for the future.

Cliff Blackwell, RMS

ASLEF members – including Steve Williams, Brian Corbett, sporting our union's tee-shirt tribute to the Ramones, Andy Hudd, Garry Heath, Bernard Kennedy and Daniel Masrani – from Cardiff, Swansea and Bristol branches, join Dennis Skinner, Labour MP for Bolsover, to support Labour candidates in the election for the National Assembly for Wales.

No go on DOO

Barnham branch was delighted to welcome GS Mick Whelan and EC1 Marz Colombini to its meeting on Sunday 3 April. Mick delivered a passionate speech regarding current ASLEF concerns including DOO, the challenges facing our freight sector drivers, the threat to the steel industry, the politics behind protecting our membership, DfT Wilkinson's attack on our members, and the reasoning behind ASLEF's position on our pensions. Mick took questions from the floor, largely on GTR's plans to increase DOO, and we were left in no doubt that ASLEF would not allow any extension. Where there is currently no DOO, there will be no DOO. Thanks to Mick and Marz for attending, to branch secretary Jeff Turner for making the arrangements, and his wife for providing the high standard buffet. Tony Martin got his 45 year badge – a very great achievement – he's a lovely chap, and loyal member, who spent some time at King's Cross and often delights us with stories of working on the Deltics!

Mike Trodd, Barnham

Jeff Turner, Marz Colombini, Mick Whelan and Simon Birtwhistle (top) and Tony Martin (above) receives his 45 year badge from branch chair Martin Crick

Derby branch sends its best wishes to Bros Chris Lee, Jeff Clements and Kev Flight who have retired from East Midlands Trains. They were presented with their retirement certificates, ASLEF tankards and steam coal trains. We wish them a long and happy retirement.
Eamonn Tague, branch secretary

GS Mick Whelan and national organiser Simon Weller joined members – and Steve Waltho, the Mayor of Dudley – in the West Midlands in March

BEACON OF HOPE

The Durham Miners' Gala is Britain's biggest and most historic celebration of trade union values. First held in 1871, more than 150,000 people fill the streets of Durham every second Saturday in July to celebrate our heritage and the values of solidarity and community. It is also a rallying point in the fight back against this Conservative government. And, with the Tories determined to drive trade unions out of political life, it provides a vital platform for the union movement to make the case for the value of collective action. The Big Meeting has hosted many heroes of the labour movement – such as Keir Hardie and Nye Bevan – and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn will be joining us for the 132nd gala on 9 July. For our gala to continue to be a beacon of hope, and solidarity, we need your support. Please become a friend, which can be done online by direct debit. Just visit www.friendsofdurhamminersgala.org

Dave Hopper, general secretary, Durham Miners' Association, The Miners' Hall, Durham

Howard Kaye, Mick Whelan, Khalid Rana, Nigel Gibson and Steve Meredith face the music at Gidea Park

THE LOCOMOTIVE JOURNAL
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN.

Mick Holder turns back time to May 1916

This month we reprint two letters, from the lively correspondence columns of the *Locomotive Journal*, during the Great War a century ago

GRUMBLERS ARE IMPREGNATED WITH SELFISHNESS

Under the pseudonym Hope, a member writes: 'I cannot understand men, trade unionists, who are in receipt of a guaranteed month, exclusive of Sunday duty, going to their foreman, as they have done at Crewe, and asking him to reduce the staff, ie reduce some drivers to firemen, and some firemen to cleaners. They, the grumblers, are suffering no hardship, unless being in the society of their wives and children a bit more is hardship. Perhaps they have a hazy idea that big weeks made, with excessive overtime, is quite in keeping with our branch room ideals. My own opinion is that they are impregnated with selfishness. Oh, sir, may the day be not far off when our union will protect men from their own selfishness, and the unselfish man from the selfishness of others. Would it not be far nobler and more sincere if men would come to the branch room and lift up their voices in indignation at the paltry rates of pay, per day, paid to our drivers and firemen.'

THE SOUL'S FINE COURAGE

DR Gateman writes: 'Will you allow me to say a few words on AF Roberts's paragraph in the *Locomotive Journal* which reads: "Let us go on educating our young people in the industrial and political side of trade unionism." Why, at our branch, they condemn us for it! At the time the Conscription Bill was being introduced we received pamphlets from different Labour movements telling us to remember the future and, when the secretary placed them before the chairman, he refused to read them. I hope that, after reading these encouraging articles, we, or at least our branch, will have the soul's fine courage to begin anew. It is strange in life that we recognise the right of every criminal, no matter how clear his guilt, to have a fair trial, and to speak in his own defence, yet those who work around us, we condemn every day, misjudge and sentence them, without a moment's listening to reasons, causes, or motives.'

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If you are eligible tov vote, you may have already received your ballot paper by post or email.

- Online voting closes on 18th May, and postal ballots a few days before.
- Be sure to vote 'YES' to motion 12 on political donations and subscriptions.
- You can return your ballot by post or online using a unique code on the ballot paper.

STEVE GRANT TOP OFFICER WHO BELIEVED IN PREPARATION, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION – AND DELIVERED AT ALL LEVELS

All our thoughts, respects, and condolences go to Doreen, Steve's wife, his family, and friends, of which many of you reading this are proud to be part. I should start with an apology to all those who wanted to write this piece but, in my mind, I can hear Steve, in his usual forthright way, saying 'Don't apologise, get on with it!'

I first met Steve through Terry Wilkinson – they reinvigorated ASLEF in District 8 and delivered, again and again, for members – and got to know him when, along with Alan Dodds, another great officer who is no longer with us, we attended, as new District Secretaries, a residential course on industrial tribunals at Crouch End. By the end of the course I had two new friends and Steve was saying it was no longer enough to rely on loyalty, and the values we all shared, we had to educate our reps and become as professional as those with whom we negotiated and, in his words, 'protect the members from themselves'.

Steve believed in 'preparation, education, participation' and, if they would not listen, 'fight with all your might' whether for an individual, or the collective. He also believed in delivering at all levels.

None of this tells you about the man. I knew he had strong politics, and a strong belief in fairness, and was driven by a passion to make things better for others – even if he was a Tottenham Hotspur supporter – and some of the messages we exchanged probably should not be reproduced because you have to understand the humour behind them. Steve was always immaculate – the old-fashioned word 'dapper' suited him – and went with his professional ethos. He loved to cook and was incredibly well-read, always peppering his emails and messages with quotes and links. Two things that struck people about Steve were how much he cared, and his loyalty; these two traits, combined with his dry sense of humour, made him stand out.

Steve was a fighter to the end

Steve was a fighter. He demonstrated that in his determination to make things better for those he represented, the causes he espoused, and in the battle against cancer that he won. Sadly, the treatment exacerbated some underlying health issues that meant he had to retire early and these eventually got the better of him. Throughout he maintained his sense of humour and continued to send me things he thought I should be aware of, or just to make a friend laugh, every day.

The phrase ASLEF through and through is sometimes overused but Steve was proud to be ASLEF and promoted the union in everything he did. He was a man of traditional values but modern ways who cared about those he represented, and others, and loved the terminology of brother and sister and comrade. So, Brother Grant, rest well. You did us proud and will always be remembered.

Mick Whelan, general secretary

My wife Ann and I have known Steve, who has died at the age of 63, and Doreen for many years. First, on a professional basis, with me writing for the *Evening Standard* and later, I am delighted to say, a personal friendship developed, the memory of which I shall forever treasure.

Steve was a lovely, lovely man and a pleasure to be with – though that was probably not a view shared by London Underground management. The union has lost one of its most skilled negotiators and members know how much of the pay scale and benefits they enjoy today are down to him.

I have, of course, been on the receiving end of Steve's tongue; such as many years ago during an LU dispute involving drink making facilities in local station and depot offices. This appeared on the front page of the *Standard* as The Great Tea Urn Strike or something similar. Did my ears burn after that!

Then there was the royal wedding day Tube strike threat in 2011. Steve did not actually say there would be a strike that day, it was merely an 'option'. It was open to interpretation when the strike might be – so I interpreted it as a royal wedding strike. Another front page, one which attracted howls of anguish across the UK, and worldwide attention, and Arkwright Road was under telephone siege for days. The real purpose was to get LU back round the negotiating table in a stalled pay dispute. And it worked! The royal wedding strike threat got him into terrible trouble at Arkwright Road – not that he cared about that. His only concern was getting a good deal for 'his' members – which he did.

I will miss you, Steve, very much; your professionalism, our meetings, a glass of red but, most of all, your friendship.

Dick Murray, former transport editor, ***Evening Standard***

EIRWYN JAMES A REALLY GREAT BLOKE

Sad to report the sudden loss of former driver and LDC rep Eirwyn James, aged 76. He started cleaning at Machynlleth shed in 1956, went firing at Tyseley, then back to Mach where he fired the last steam-hauled Cambrian coast express. He moved to Watford for driving, where he remained until returning to Wales, and Aberystwyth, in the 1980s up to its closure when he was senior man at a very young depot. When Aber closed he went back to Mach until retiring in 1998. A Welsh speaker, and a great bloke to work with, his knowledge and good humour were much appreciated by boy drivers and firemen alike. Several of us had the chance to see Eirwyn (and have a drink or two) at a reunion last year. He will be greatly missed.

Jim Teague, ex-Aberystwyth

Eirwyn wasn't rostered to do the job but was asked by the branch, as senior hand, to work the last steam engine out of Aber at Christmas 1988

LEN HENDRY GET YOUR DUST COAT, LAD

Len Hendry, another Stratford legend, has departed on his final journey, after a long illness. A very likeable character, from a loco family (his father Harry and brother Sid were also drivers at Stratford) he will be remembered for his voracious appetite, as he never seemed to be full up. Someone painted 'Sir Len Hendry' on a continental freight wagon that was said to be seen all over the continent. A phrase a lot of his second men will remember is 'Get your dust coat, lad, we've got some work to do.' He will be missed by all who knew him.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

RON MUSGROVE REAL CHARACTER

Ron Musgrove, former Nine Elms/Waterloo and Weymouth, sadly passed away on Sunday 3 April after being in poor health since an operation on his back in 2003. Ron transferred to Weymouth from Waterloo in 1991 and took early retirement in 2001. He was a real character, and well liked. Ron leaves his wife Dot and daughters Cheryl and Karen and six grandchildren; our condolences and heartfelt sympathy to them all.

Rick Patterson, Weymouth

We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN. The writer of our star letter wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.

On the rails: Politics R Us

In response to Jaime Campbell (*Journal*, March) and his request for less politics and more railway stories in the *Journal*, it is my belief that all railway stories are intrinsically linked to political will. Think about the loss of coal and steel traffic; franchise renewals; electrification; TfL and Night Tube; and the sale of stations. Peel away the wrapper on these rail stories you find a political decision instrumental in the process. Being affiliated to the Labour Party is our vital link to the parliamentary machine, enabling this trade union to lobby for the benefit of members, on whose livelihoods these political decisions will impact. I understand interest in politics is not to every driver's liking, but as a union we have a responsibility to inform members of political decisions being made that will affect the future of our industry and, more to the point, the future of the driving grades.
Brian Jones, RMS, Swansea

Political voice for ASLEF

I fully concur with the GS's response to Jaime Campbell (*Journal*, March). Jaime, it's a long time since I've heard the points you make, and whilst I respect your right of expression I am afraid politics affect our lives in everything we do. Politics nationalised a broken and bankrupt privately-owned railway after World War 2, without which we would not have a rail industry. Politics crippled the network under Beeching in the 1960s. The network was privatised in the 1990s, a political decision that we, as a union, oppose, with the consent of our members, so of course the *Journal* reflects our support for a political party that aspires to our values. I started as a cleaner in 1953, at your depot, on £2.10 for a 48 hour week, and joined ASLEF the same day. It took 21 years, until 1974, through strikes and work to rules, for us to gain sick pay and pension rights (poor at the time, but look where we are now) and why? Because the government in power for 17 of those years was Tory. No boss ever offered me anything my union did not have to fight for, and although I don't agree with everything ASLEF does, or has done, my life is what it is today because my union fought every negative political decision aimed at its members. So, my friend, best wishes for your future, get involved and you, too, will soon come to find the importance of a political voice in ASLEF.
Len Worboys, RMS, 63 years a member

THE DOCTORS ASKED ME 'ARE YOU STILL IN THE UNION?'

I wish to thank our union for fighting an asbestos claim on my behalf. Thompsons solicitors worked extremely hard on the case and finally, after a long battle, reached a settlement. I was diagnosed after attending the Royal Brompton Hospital in London for a check-up; doctors told me I had been exposed to asbestos and questioned me about my work history. I told them I had been employed on the railways, in the footplate grade, for 46 years and they said, 'Are you still in the union?' To which I replied, 'Yes, I am still a member of ASLEF's retired section.' The defendants were BR and GNER. There was no problem with BR but

Lawyers for GNER's insurers tried to deny TUPE transfer

GNER argued first on limitation, and then claimed TUPE transfer did not take place. This was settled with the help of Kelvin Hopkins, my MP, who wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport and helped prove TUPE transfer did take place. I retired in 2002, under GNER, but GNER has gone into liquidation so Thompsons were left dealing with GNER's insurers. Thompsons told me I could settle for a partial, or full and final, settlement. If I had taken partial my family could have returned to court if my condition worsens but, as GNER is in liquidation, there may be no money left in the kitty. So I settled for a full and final offer. If the railways had not been privatised my case would have been straightforward so, once again, we see it is the workers in the industry who pay the price.
Brian Tagg, RMS, Luton

Times have changed

I write in support of Jaime Campbell (*Journal*, March). I, too, have no desire to read about politics. ASLEF affiliated with the Labour Party in 1903, but times have changed. Perhaps Labour needs not be ASLEF's primary focus 113 years later? If, as GS Mick Whelan says, 'The *Journal* is a magazine for members of ASLEF' then he might wish to consider the possibility that a majority of those members view politics with indifference or distaste, regardless of any political inclinations; primarily they are railway workers, not political activists.
Richard Griffin, Harrow on the Hill

Never mind the ballots

Like many members I am very disappointed by changes made to our pension scheme and read with interest Steve Hill's letter (*Journal*, March). Why accept a nationwide deal? We don't have nationwide pay deals; each company comes to an agreement with the union locally. Many members of other TOCs and FOCs, and my own employer, Abellio, could possibly have negotiated a better deal under a separate arrangement. A nationwide deal may prevent further fragmentation of the scheme but could we have had better terms negotiated on a company by company basis? Time and again articles have been printed in the *Journal* about our pension and how those on the pensions committee would vehemently fight any changes or end to our final salary pensions or changes to the scheme. But here we are today with a deal done and no ballot for our members!
Kester Escandon, Norwich depot

Mandate from members

I wish to thank national organiser Simon Weller for his response to my letter (*Journal*, March) criticising the rail unions with regard to our pension scheme. His justification for the position the unions have adopted, however, misses the points I have raised not only through the *Journal* but at a meeting I attended where Simon was present and where I took him to task on decisions made by ASLEF's executive committee regarding the strategy on changes to the pension. At no point over the last 12 months, since negotiations began with ATOC, did ASLEF inform the membership or ask their opinions on any

proposed changes. Simon admitted further attacks on the pension are to be expected but confirmed that all rail unions had agreed on a strategy of negotiation not dispute. I request – no, indeed, I demand – that any further changes are put to the membership in the form of a referendum before any agreement is reached. You have no right, as our elected representatives, to reach agreements on vital issues, such as pension changes, without a mandate from the membership to do so.
Steve Hill, Manchester Piccadilly No 1, TPE

Negotiating with ATOC

Through no fault of my own I am now having to work two years longer before I claim my pension without incurring a penalty for leaving earlier. Now I am not here to moan about our union for negotiating a way forward for a national settlement as this was forced on us, as a collective, by a government hell bent on attacking the working people of this great country. That said, now is the time to get ATOC to sit around the table and talk about staff travel for non-protected staff. ATOC will not be able to use the old excuse of 'we are not a negotiating body' as they have just proved they can, with the agreement over pensions.
Paul Cutmore, Chingford branch

I love zero hours contracts

I was very disappointed about your article about the West Coast Railway Company (*Journal*, February). I have been with them over three years and it is the best company I have worked for in 43 years. You refer to the owner as Farmer Smith as if that is some sort of insult. What's wrong with being a farmer? Actually he's a businessman. May I remind drivers you work for large multinational corporations which are rabidly capitalist in tooth and claw. Can you visit the CEO of your corporation and have a good moan? No, of course not, you can't get near those people, but I can visit my boss any time I like. ASLEF is very condemnatory about our zero hours method of pay. Well, we like it. We have some drivers on salary but most of us choose when we work and when we don't and can take as much leave whenever we want. Last summer I had five holidays. It's wonderful. We don't just do charter trains and steamers. Four-fifths of my work is infrastructure work at night. Infrastructure companies like West Coast drivers as we are much more reliable than the freight companies and have much route knowledge freight drivers don't have. We also provide a lot of conductors for passenger companies over diverted routes. ASLEF refuses to accept that drivers over 60 have the right to earn a living and is prejudiced against the way we are paid, despite the fact that we all like it. We have more freedom than any other driver working on the national network.
Arno Brooks, York

TOSH LOOKS JUST THE TICKET

Tosh McDonald does look 'just the ticket' in a red ASLEF return the railways to public ownership tee-shirt. But, as a retired member of ASLEF, I feel the cold. Is the train ticket tee-shirt available as a sweatshirt?
Kevin Christie, RMS

Sorry, Kevin. It's just a tee-shirt at the moment. But we'll see if there are any more takers for a sweatshirt version.

It's not just Boris v Dave

Anyone following the EU referendum campaign could be excused for thinking it's all about Tory infighting. There's a real danger that hugely important matters will get lost in the muddle of Boris versus Dave. The UK sends £19 billion a year to the EU and, whilst agriculture makes up 1.6% of the EU economy, and employs 5.5% of the population, it swallows 40% of the EU budget. The EU promotes zero hours contracts and attacks collective bargaining agreements whilst encouraging the use of Luxembourg as a tax haven for tax-dodging multinational corporations that make most of their profits in the UK.
John Metcalfe, Carlisle

People want strong leaders

Oh dear. Which of us is actually the one in the muddle? Chris Martin (*Journal*, February) is one of those I referred to as living in a dream state and is the one who got in a muddle. Jeremy Corbyn will not win the 2020 general election, assuming he survives that long, because he is, quite frankly, unelectable. Just because a few thousand people pay a reduced fee to join the Labour Party to take part in its leadership election doesn't mean the British people want him as Prime Minister. The British people, above all else, want strong leadership. I don't want a pacifist in charge of my country and I don't believe the electorate will, either. No Corbyn government, no railway renationalisation. Simples!
RA Sargeant, RMS, Derby branch

Very much appreciated

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the branches for their kind donations during my long-term sickness. They were a great help and very much appreciated.
Rob Chilton, VTEC, King's Cross

ON LOAN from British Rail hard enamel badge. Individually numbered, brooch fastening. £6 + £1 p&p from josephduddington@googlemail.com

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Steam Age to Pendolino – everything changes but the song remains the same

Driver assessor and Euston branch archivist MICK HUMPHRYS, with a little help from branch secretary CLIFF HOLLOWAY, looks back at the story of his branch

Top: Euston branch officers (back) Brett Cooper, Chris Davidson, Ross Jones, Malcolm Millen (front) Dave Calfe, John Turner, Cliff Holloway, Anthony Shea, Petar Petrovic. Above left: back to the Cock Tavern (where the décor is still the same) Brett Cooper, Ross Jones, Anthony Shea, Dave Calfe, Paul Feltham, Cliff Holloway, John Turner and Petar Petrovic

HAVING enjoyed Mick Holder's excellent compilations from the past in recent issues I thought readers of the *Journal* might be interested in the history of our branch, especially as we have two notable anniversaries coming up.

Camden branch was, prior to 1920, part of King's Cross; the need for a separate branch was identified and, on 25 January 1920, the branch was formed at the Engineers' Hotel in Gloucester Road. The first officers were FA Howell, chairman; L Murray, vice-chair; and AW Harris, secretary. The only business dealt with at this inaugural meeting was the adoption of standing orders, election of officers and a decision to hold meetings on the third Sunday of the month at 19.00. During the first year the branch welcomed 11 new members and circulars from head office included one titled Hands off Russia which the committee decided to support. The LDC dealt with the working alteration sheet, annual holidays and turns of driving and firing duty prior to appointment.

END OF STEAM

The last Camden branch meeting was held on Tuesday 7 December 1965. The officers were W Jones, chairman; G Court, vice-chair; GA Bridges, secretary. Business included the number of men allowed in a cab; a head office circular regarding the TUC gold badge for 1966; and a social evening commemorating the closure of Camden depot on 26 November.

With the modernisation plans in the 1950s and 1960s, and the end of steam, Camden and Willesden steam sheds were closed in December '65. This coincided with the start of the main line 25kv electrification service from Euston. Records show there were numerous issues with management prior to the move to Euston, including the booking on point; mess room facilities; easing of manning/single manning with the introduction of electric locomotives ending main line diesel operation with their boiler steam heat system which, of course, had an impact on the duties of firemen; and protection of earnings, especially for the firemen and the overall footplate complement.

The protection of firemen's earnings was achieved by the introduction of a starred fireman system which ensured that no appointed starred fireman would be displaced or made redundant and, most importantly, any bonus payment, mileage, etc, was still paid to the fireman on a job that was previously double manned. This system continued right up to the 1980s when the last of the firemen within the grade were made up to driver.

My father was a starred fireman although, by 1971, he became fed up with being a second man, and having to book on and off, to men made up to drivers though the redundant system and who were many years junior to him, so he moved to Watford for a driver's job.

Edward Prior joined Camden branch as a 19-year-old fireman on 18 September 1921 and was a member right up to his retirement as a top link driver in June 1967. He must have been one of very few to be members of the branch from its near formation to its closure!

Euston depot opened on 3 January 1966. Drivers and firemen from Willesden were given the option of transferring to the new depot and 87 of the most senior drivers and firemen – my father and uncle among them – did. The branch secretary had a busy month!

OVERTIME PAYMENTS

The first Euston branch meeting was held on Tuesday 1 February 1966 at the Cock Tavern in Phoenix Road with 22 members present. Business included a donation to Dr Barnado's of £1, to the Spastics of 5s, and a discussion about the new clothing issue of pea jackets. There was a question from J Higgins about an inquiry into the booking on and off times on all duties and turns at Euston within all the links which was noted.

Fifty years later, on 21 January 2016, Euston branch met at 14.30, once more at the Cock Tavern. With branch chair Tony Shea on holiday and vice-chair Sean Hodgkins not present I was elected acting chair and, alongside branch secretary Cliff Holloway, and 12 other members, including our district officer Dickie Fisher, conducted the meeting. Business dealt with included secretary's correspondence and circulars; nomination of general secretary; trustee reports from reps; issues with posting of alteration sheets; issues over mess room and toilet cleaning; the AAD agenda; and overtime payments. Items discussed were, in many ways, very similar to many of our previous meetings down the decades!

The meeting concluded with the branch secretary, on behalf of us all, wishing a long and happy retirement to Brothers Tony Harris and Paul Collins and, finally, he gave an update on the branch banner and the 50 year badge commemorating the branch anniversary. The meeting closed at 16.10.

LEMON POSSET

Lucy Knox serves up a tangy dessert for spring

Pour 300ml double cream into a medium saucepan and slowly bring to a simmer, stirring. Add 100g caster sugar and stir until dissolved. Add 45ml lemon juice and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and stir for 2 mins. Remove from the heat. Pour into 2 to 3 heatproof dishes and leave to cool completely. Chill for 3 hrs or until set. Serve chilled decorated with fresh raspberries.

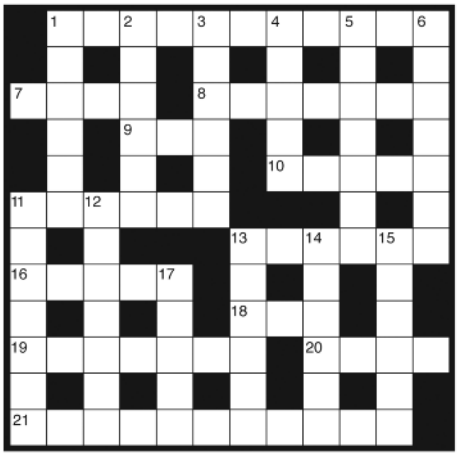
SNACK ATTACK?

Next time reach not for that Mars bar but a packet of Urban Fruit – just fruit, gently baked at low temperatures to hang on to all the goodness, natch – with no sugars, sulphites or other funny stuff. The range includes banana, cherry, pineapple, mango, apple & pear. Perfect to munch on the move. Available at Asda, the Co-op, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. £1 for 35g and £1.97 for 100g.

THE LIFE OF PIE

Pieminister make premium, but affordable, award-winning pies with responsibly sourced ingredients. Try the Moo beef steak and craft ale; Matador with spicy beef, chorizo, olive and butter beans; or the veggie Saag Pie-Neer (they do a nice line in awful puns) with peas, paneer, spinach, potato, chilli and mango. These posh pies are available in posh pubs, Waitrose or from www.pieminister.co.uk. £21 for six.

Prize Crossword 121 by Tom Williams



Across

1 Barber
7 Little devils
8 An inner roof
9 Partake of food
10 Get narrower at one end
11 Mouth of a volcano
13 Black playing cards
16 Stringy shoe ties
18 Tree prone to disease
19 Copy
20 Porridge flakes
21 Loan shark

Down

1 Large basket for a picnic
2 Small creature with external skeleton
3 Surgeon or physician
4 Lawfully force out of a property
5 Below knee guard for sports (4, 3)
6 Respectful greeting
11 Mineral essential for healthy bones
12 Public bidding sale
13 Arm of a dress
14 Nut that may be sugar-coated
15 Newspaper boss
17 Sheltered from light

Solution to Crossword 120

Across: 1 Season 7 Exact 8 Alsatian 9 Title 10 Kind 12 Toss 13 Smut 14 Limp 15 Brew 17 Webs 19 Miner 20 Epilogue 21 Niece 22 Garter. **Down:** 1 Snack 2 Absentminded 3 Noises 4 Tenth 5 Bantamweight 6 Street 11 Doe 13 Sew 14 Lemons 15 Boxing 16 Greek 18 Shear.

Congratulations to **Richard Moseley** of **Crawley, West Sussex**, who was last month's winner. The winner of this month's Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

You can see more of Tom Williams's crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk

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Thanks for all your responses to the 120th prize crossword in the April edition of the ASLEF *Journal*. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF *Journal*, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 May

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If you are being harassed at work, bullied or discriminated against, and if your local, branch or district rep is unavailable, call the industrial relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk. If you are arrested or interviewed by police and need legal assistance – day or night – call the members' emergency hotline on 0800 587 7530. ASLEF also provides first class legal advice free for members and dependents.

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